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DECORATION & FURNITURE

WOOD-CARVING BY WOMEN IN THE CINCINNATI SCHOOL OF DESIGN.



PERHAPS none of the fair devotees of American decorative art have found more satisfaction in their work than those who have betaken themselves to wood-carving. When the amateur's porcelain plaque burns out in treacherous colors;

when, hunting through Kensington crewels for a tender tint for her forget-me-nots, she finds only hard and unfeeling blues, it is with a sense of relief that she turns to her carving bench. Wood is such genuine material! Heart of oak; ripe, rich-toned black-walnut; fine, warm-blooded cherry; maple and ash, sweet and clean; white holly, that lily-wood of the forest; ebony, so hard and close of grain that it has almost forgotten to be wood at all—these, and the thousand other varieties, native and foreign, are the carver's stock in trade. Sympathetic, responsive to the touch of the tool, with just the resistance that stimulates effort—these qualities of the material account for the fascination one finds in even the first crude cutting. Until within the past few years most of the wood-carving done in this country was the work of foreign workmen trained in foreign schools. Much of it, however good in mechanical execution, was a weariness to the eye. It had nothing to say to America, and little to say to art. Wood-carving is so pre-eminently a household art that it should, to have any lasting interest, draw its designs and its spirit from the familiar surroundings of the household, and have its share of the "Americanism" that we deem so precious a quality in the picture and the novel.

It is a matter of special congratulation when we find any sort of art-work carried on in this spirit; and in no one instance, perhaps, has it been productive of better results than in the wood-carving done at the Cincinnati School of Design. In 1873 Mr. Benn Pitman, who for years had been interested in all matters of practical and industrial art, started a class in wood-carving as an experiment, fitting up a work-room at his own expense and giving tuition free. It was a most palpable hit, and carving was shortly afterward made a permanent department of the School of Design, with Mr. Pitman at its head. Over one hundred students on the average, principally young women, have been instructed each term. More than four hundred articles, from book-racks and picture-frames to cabinets and mantels, have been carved each term, and the added value of the work thus produced, beyond the material employed, has

been estimated by experts at from \$3,500 to \$4,000, or nearly double the annual outlay incidental to this department. The practical work is supplemented by theoretical teaching, and lectures on the principles and growth of decorative art are regularly delivered.

Of these Saturday morning lectures I have a grateful recollection that they were not merely technical instruction in wood-carving, but an outlook at what was doing in the whole round world of art. They were stimulating and suggestive. Faithfulness of design was insisted on from the first. "Look to see how your flowers grow, or your weeds," the teacher would say to the veriest beginner, recommending as a pocket companion a little drawing-book in which plant forms, leaves, and buds might be drawn on sight. Thus it happened that the work, however crude, meant something, and had artistic value. Also, it was fresh and original. There was no slavish imitation of old forms. Some one says that to draw dragons well one must believe in dragons; to which might perhaps be added

Mrs. Hayes, lately hung in the White House, was intrusted to Mr. Pitman and his pupils. It is a massive frame of oak, elaborately carved in designs emblematic of its subject and the cause it is designed to commemorate.

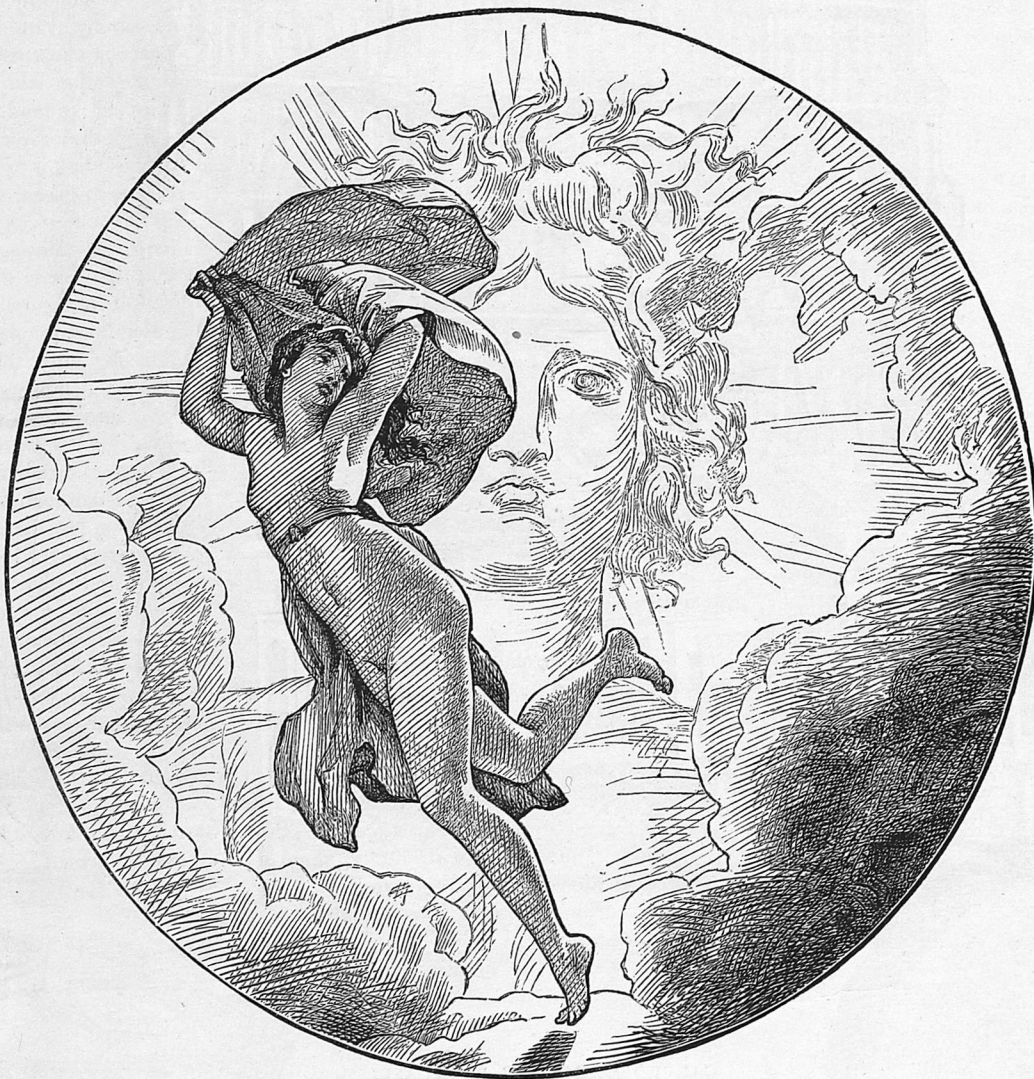
Some exquisite carving is being done on the interior of Our Lady's Chapel at the convent of the Ursuline Sisters in Brown County, Ohio. Mr. Pitman has given the sisters occasional instruction in carving for several years past, and they have wrought out exceedingly beautiful results.

The bookcase, mantel, and door herewith illustrated, are wholly the work of the School of Design, both as to construction and decoration. The sitting-room mantel [p. 19] is of black-walnut; a bevelled-edge mirror occupies the centre; on each side are oil-painted panels. Over the panels are silver bronze heads, representing Summer and Winter; the brackets supporting the shelf are solid blocks of French walnut, the carved foliage being five inches in relief, wild pansies to the

right, succory to the left. The cutting of these brackets, by Miss Adelaide Nourse, of Cincinnati, combines great naturalness and delicacy with marked boldness and strength. The bookcase [p. 18] is of mahogany, with French walnut pillars and ebony inlays on the front supports. The sitting-room door [shown on extra supplement] is of cherry, with lower panels of oak. The rich projecting cornice, the heavily carved brackets, and the decorated pilasters show how handsome a feature of a room a door may be made.

All this, it may be remembered, is the work of women, and it indicates what will be especially the woman's share of the building of the House Beautiful of the future.

CALISTA H. PATCHIN.



DECORATIVE DESIGN.

AFTER EHREMAN'S PICTURE OF "VENUS CROSSING THE SUN."

that one should be very much afraid of dragons. Following this artistic leading, it is difficult to find a place in a system of American decoration for the hybrid forms that embodied the element of the grotesque in the old carvings.

While the greater part of the carving done at the school disappears into private homes, some of it, done by a number of pupils and therefore representative work, is in public places. The carving done by the class on the great organ in the Cincinnati Music Hall is rich and massive, good in design and execution. The owner of an elegant residence in the city gave the class an order for the carving of a wainscot, doors, and other interior adornments, which were beautifully executed. The order for the frame for the portrait of

embroidered. The room is panelled with dark oak, and the panels are divided at intervals by columns fluted to one third of their height. Our illustration shows the designs of nine of these panels and of the frieze above them, together with the elaborate pattern with which each column is decorated. As may be inferred from these designs, care and elaboration in matters of detail have rarely been carried to a greater extent than in this gorgeous work of Holbein's, which is perhaps the most interesting of the many portrait pictures with which the collection in the palace at Hampton Court is so abundantly enriched. Even the back of the embroidered canopy, under which the king sits, is decorated with the arms of England, surrounded by intricate scroll-work, in which the Tudor rose forms a leading feature.

PRACTICAL HINTS FOR ROOM DECORATION.

THE first thing to be considered in the decoration of an apartment is the portions that are to be ornamented, and what ornamentation is to be used ; if there be any characteristic style in the architecture it will be well to follow that style in the ornament ; for instance, if the style be Gothic, the forms should have a somewhat rigid character, with straight lines and circular curves, with firmly developed forms, such as fleur-de-lis, Tudor roses, stars, conventional lilies, all of which should be in rich coloring, treated flatly as a rule, and outlined with a fine line of black. But if the style should be Italian, the forms should be thin and graceful, with arabesque foliage and occasional flowers and birds, in more delicate coloring, shaded with pale tints of color blended softly together, the more brilliant colors being reserved for small forms. But if the room consists merely of plain walls and panelled doors, shutters, etc., almost any kind of ornament may be used, and there will then be full scope for floral or other forms; keeping in view the fact that the decorated parts should harmonize with the furniture, hangings, pictures, and articles of vertu, which are to be placed therein. For small panels a gold ground to the ornament will invariably harmonize, and as the walls are perhaps covered with an artistically designed paper-hanging, little more decoration is needed, except in beautifully embroidered hangings, mantelpiece valance, etc., the needlework for which should be in character with the decorations on the walls.

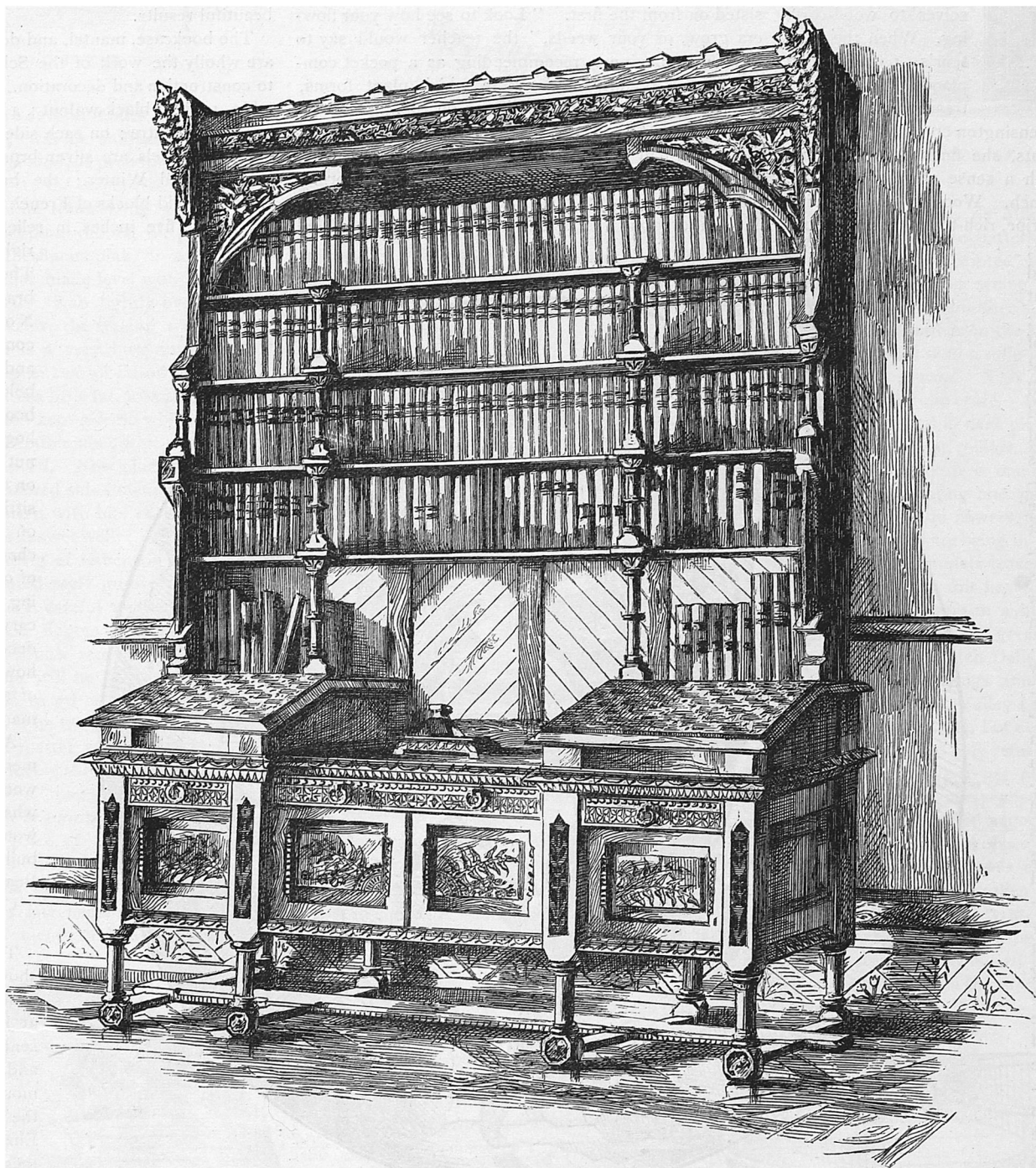
Before commencing to paint anything ornamental upon any wall surface or panel, it must be properly prepared. Of course the house painter will see that the surface of the wall is perfectly smooth and even, and the requisite number of "coats of color" applied; the last should be what is termed "flatting"—that is, turpentine color only, or with a little copal varnish mixed with it, which is more lasting, and gives less heaviness in appearance. The style of ornament must be decided on before giving the workman instructions, and where the various breaks or dividing lines will be, so that he may work his colors to finish in an exact line where the colors meet; it is always as well to prepare a sample of color on a piece of paper as a guide for him to match his colors to. If the wall is to be divided by a dado line the skirting should be heavier in color, the dado less heavy, the upper a lighter or different tint altogether, and the dividing band of some contrasting color, so that the painter should lay in three portions of the wall and neatly finish them, ready for the ornamentation. The samples spoken of need not necessarily be in oil-color, although that is best, as

some find great difficulty in matching tints, unless they are told exactly the combination of pigments of which the color is composed, and, indeed, it is well in ground colors to have as few in combination as possible; often a good tone of color is lost by trying to, as it were, overdo it, and such overdoing results in muddiness of tint. Bright or gaudy colors of course are not recommended; but the tones should be somewhat subdued, the brighter colors being reserved for smaller forms in the decoration. It is necessary to be explicit on this matter, as the slightest change or deviation from the originally proposed tint (which of course will have been well studied with regard to aspect of room, light, furniture, etc.) would destroy the harmony of the whole. For example, citron is best made with Antwerp blue and orange chrome, and if wanted slightly warmer, a touch of crimson lake added. Now, if a pattern of

The following scheme of color adopted by a prominent decorator recently for a large, handsome room may be suggestively useful to many of our readers: Commencing with the carpet, which was composed of rich low-tone colors, the skirting was nearly black, the dado a rich chocolate, with a positive black pattern of very small conventional flowers. The ground of the dado rail was citron green and the ornament entirely gold, finely outlined with black, consisting of quaintly drawn animals, birds, and fishes, interspersed with foliage. The wall-space was a low-toned purple, without any ornament, for the reception of a few choice water-color drawings. About two feet below the cornice there was a band or frieze of ornament in soft colors, and a little gold. The space between this band and cornice was blue, and studded irregularly with stars of various shapes and sizes, all in gold, with here and there a set of five or seven arranged in a circle. The cornice was simple, and left nearly white to break the ceiling line, the ceiling itself being mostly blue and gold, the blue being lighter than that on the wall, and the gold outlined with black.

Often those who wish to do something they feel capable of doing fail in the commencement, by not knowing how to set about their work; in short, to get the guiding lines to work by, which will not be required after the painting is finished. The best way to get the perpendicular or horizontal lines upon a wall is to use a string, rubbed with chalk if on a dark color, and charcoal if on a light; say for a dado line, measure the height from the skirting you wish the line to be (at the present time it would be about two feet nine inches, or three feet), and then the space the band will occupy; make slight pencil marks according to these measurements, at each end of the plain wall, and between doors, windows, etc. Having rubbed the string (fine whiplcord is the best) with a piece of chalk, hold the string at one end, and get some one to hold it

at the other, exactly on the pencil marks, with the thumb against the wall; and then with the other hand, as far toward the middle as you can, raise the string gently, so that it recoils smartly upon the wall, when it will leave a clear line of chalk which can be worked to, and afterward dusted off without showing how the line was obtained. Or the measurements may be taken at certain distances, and lines ruled in pencil, with the assistance of a straight-edge. But these are not likely to be so true, on account of the joints, and very often they show the gloss of the lead after the work is finished. For perpendicular lines, first find the centre of each wall space, and mark it under the cornice and above the skirting board, and use the chalked string in the same manner as before described. But to insure a true perpendicular line, a small plummet of lead should



CARVED MAHOGANY BOOKCASE.

WORK OF THE CINCINNATI SCHOOL OF DESIGN. (SEE PAGE 17.)

such citron were given to a man who looking at it thought he could produce it with ultramarine or even Prussian blue, he would certainly fail, and in all probability would think, should he desire to make it warmer, a little vermilion might be added; but the color would thus be totally spoiled. When artists and architects make colored sketches of decorations they should make known to the actual workers of what their combinations really are composed.

Be it remembered that decoration, to a certain extent, must be subservient to the inhabitants of the room decorated, making as it were a background to the living forms, and also to the choice works of art with which many homes abound. Where pictures are hung the immediate background should have but little ornament, and that of a specially subdued character.

be attached to the end, and the upper part held until the plummet ceases to oscillate. Then placed firmly down upon the wall and struck in the same manner, this gives a perpendicular line with the greatest accuracy, from which measurements can be taken. It is always best to centre the wall spaces in this way. In ornamental and floral decoration you should invariably work from the centre so as to finish nicely at the ends, which should be complete in themselves, or it will have the appearance of a work produced by mechanical means. Panels scarcely require setting out unless a faint centre line is employed as a guide to laying down the pattern.

TILES FOR CABINETS.

It is a question how far tiles are fitted for the purpose of panels in cabinets. Usually panels of wood, carved, inlaid, or even painted, would be preferable. If tiles are used they should appear to belong (as Lewis F. Day remarks) to the furniture in which they are framed. For example, blue and white tiles set in dark wood attract the eye to the tiles instead of to the cabinet. If it is desirable that some one tone should pervade a room, still more necessary is it that one general tone should characterize a piece of furniture. Splendid things have been done in ebony inlaid with ivory, it is true, but the most harmonious results have been obtained by distributing the ivory, in somewhat minute detail, pretty evenly over the surface of the object, and allowing it only to culminate in patches where prominence was desired. So with tiles in furniture; though they may be the culminating points of color they should be no more than the culmination of the color about them—redder than the rose-wood, whiter than the satin-wood, but not contrasting with it violently. It was a common practice some years ago to stick oval plaques of Wedgwood ware in the centres of ebonized cabinet doors, and the first thing that you saw on entering a drawing-room was usually this staring plaque of white and unpleasant gray. The figure may or may not have been delicately modelled after Flaxman, but there was no doubt whatever of the fact that the panel put an end to all possibility of repose in the effect of the furniture. For tiles to be inserted in wood of darkish color, it would be best, in most cases, to let the ornament, figure, or whatever it may be, tell light on a darker ground; by that means there is more likelihood that the wood and earthenware will appear to belong one to the other. If many colors are employed they should

be such, and so arranged, as to merge themselves in the general effect. Tiles that assert themselves are certainly misplaced. The mistake is often made of using tiles of too great importance for their place, as when figures are introduced into panels which merely form the background to a shelf on which are to stand objects more deserving of attention. If we were more discreet, more truly economical, we should use some very simple tiles (of plain color, perhaps) for such a place, and so be able to afford something really worth looking at in the doors or other parts that justly claim prominence. Another simple means of economy, and

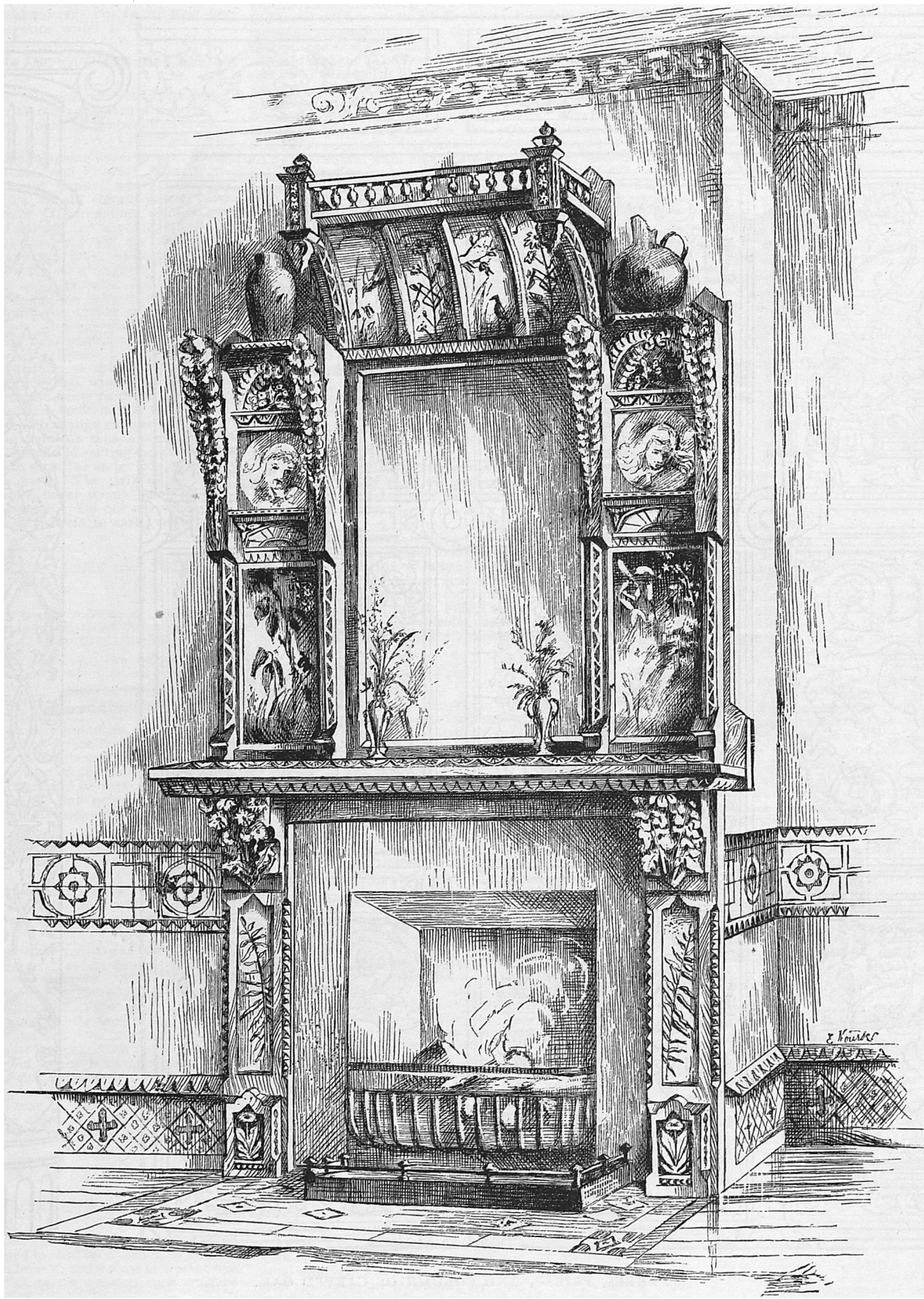
Cover the full-sized cartoon with bits of flashed glass of the appropriate color, cut out upon the cartoon with the diamond, the colored face down. Thus a mosaic of glass will be formed. Probably only two shades of each color will be needed, for these pictures are seen at such a distance that the half-tints are, in a measure, lost. But if greater detail be needed, three tints of each color might be used—light, half-tint, and shadow. Small details, except in a diaper mosaic work of brilliant and strong tints, are lost to the eye.

Lay upon this mosaic a sheet of strong paper or of cotton cloth covered with adhesive paste. When dry this is to be laid upon a plate of incandescent plate glass; as it rests upon the casting table after passage of the roller, the paper or cotton will take fire and be dissipated, and the colored glass will be welded to the solid plate of clean white glass.

If needed, in order to force actual contact, the roller which has reduced the melted glass plate to uniform thickness may be run back over the plate and its veneer of colored glass. The back of the plate glass may be ground as for show-windows, but probably the irregular surface left by contact with the bed of the casting table will produce the sparkling effect so much admired in the ancient stained-glass work, and if so the grinding and polishing may be omitted. By this method it seems that church windows in stained glass may be made in large and heavy sheets or plates, and the leaden and other sash-bars can be avoided. The process is simple and cheap, and the work can be done by workmen of ordinary intelligence and skill. The cartoon must, of course, be the work of an artist.

DECORATIVE painting for furniture is more popular than ever. Among the materials used for the purpose are satin sheeting and linoleum, or ordinary oilcloth. The former is used for panels of screens and hangings for the backs of small pianos and rooms; the latter for dados, friezes, and the

panels of doors. No preparation is required when oil paints are used, and the designs are bold and effective, and the work usually rough. Small piano tacks are used for fitting in the panels; so that the effect is as if the door itself was painted. Birds, water-lilies and plants, bulrushes, grasses, and iris are effective, or fox-gloves, gladioli, and white lilies. The standing screens, painted on colored cloths, are also popular just now. There are usually four long panels, and sometimes four smaller ones fitted in at the base, with a small cluster on each of the same flowers as adorn the panel above.



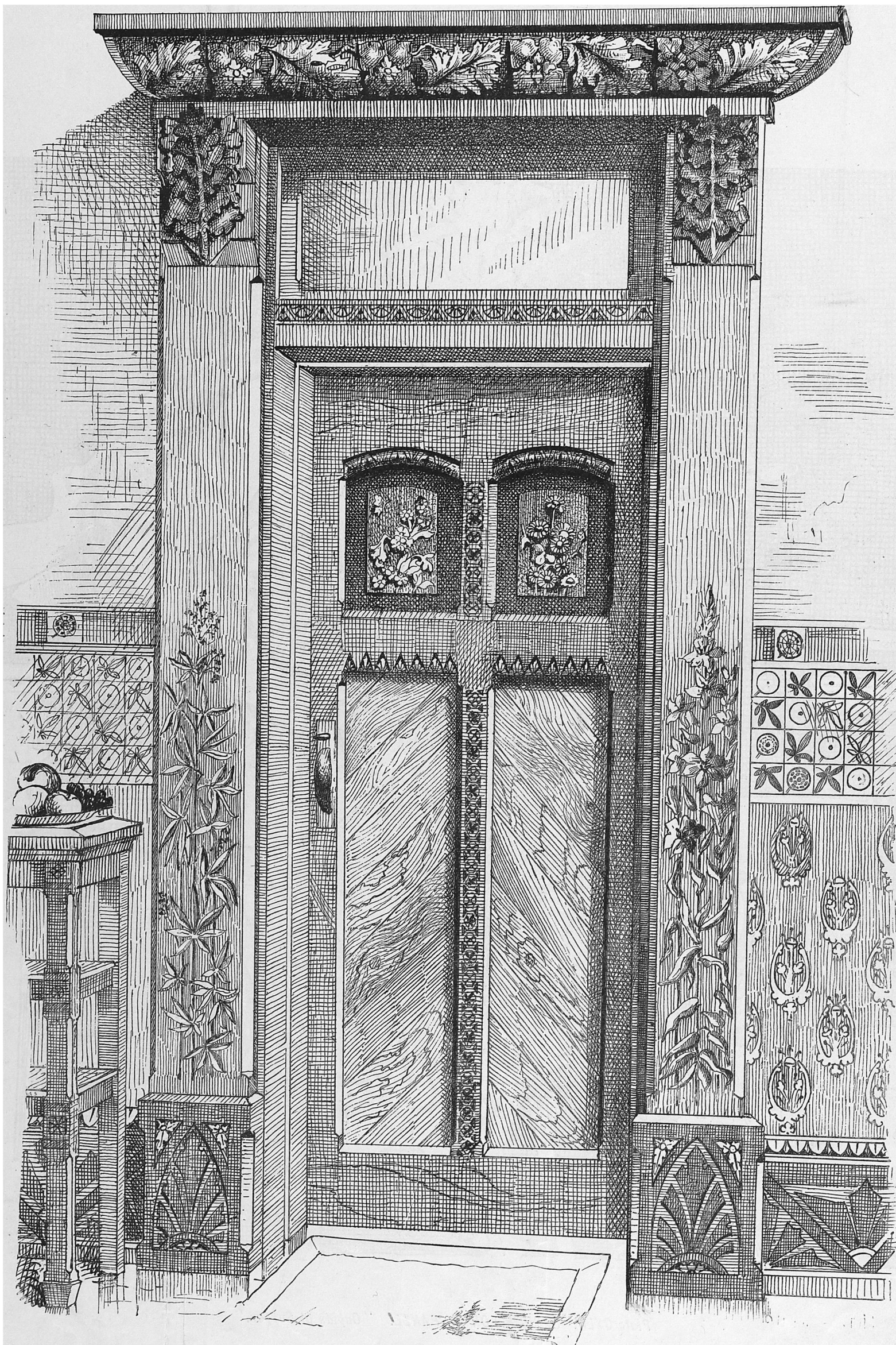
CARVED BLACK-WALNUT MANTELPIECE.

WORK OF THE CINCINNATI SCHOOL OF DESIGN. (SEE PAGE 17.)

one which is not often enough employed, is to arrange tiles in such a manner that the simpler and less expensive serve as a frame to more important ones, which, being few, we may afford to pay for at the price of art.

STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS WITHOUT BARS.

QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL MEIGS favors us with the following description of a method of producing in large and strong sheets stained-glass windows suitable for decorating churches and other buildings:



CARVED DOOR OF CHERRY, WITH LOWER PANELS OF OAK.

WORK OF THE CINCINNATI SCHOOL OF DESIGN,

(See page 17.)